

# LANDOWNER-LESSEE/SPORTSMAN RELATIONS COMMITTEE

## **Minutes of Regular Meeting Sunday, April 17, 2005 Arizona Game and Fish Department - Phoenix Office**

### **Committee Members Present**

Sanford Cohen, OHV-Sportsmen Group  
Stephen Williams, Arizona State Land Department  
John P. King, Livestock Grower  
Richard Rico, Special Services Assistant Director, AGFD  
David Hoyle, Sportsmen Group  
Joe Underwood, Sportsmen Group  
Darcy Ely, Livestock Grower  
Tami Emmett, Coronado National Forest

### **Committee Members Absent**

Shelby Bennett, Livestock Grower  
Julie Decker, Bureau of Land Management  
Ron Eichelberger, Sportsmen Group  
Hubby Grounds, Livestock Grower  
Joe Melton, Arizona Game and Fish Commission  
James O'Haco, Livestock Grower  
Jon Fugate, Sportsmen Group

### **Others Present**

Josh Avey, Landowner Relations Program Manager, AGFD  
Troy Christensen, Landowner Relations Program, AGFD  
Mark Weise, Development Branch Chief, AGFD

### **Meeting Notes**

The Landowner-Lessee/ Sportsman Relations Committee (Committee) meeting was called to order at 9:20 a.m. Chairman Sanford Cohen initiated an introduction of those present.

### **New Members/Presentations**

Mark Weise presented a plaque to David Hoyle in appreciation for serving on the Committee. Mr. Hoyle is president of the Chandler Rod and Gun Club and an avid sportsman.

Tami Emmett introduced herself as the new Access Program Coordinator for the Coronado National Forest. She will be taking over George McKay's position on the Committee. She briefly informed the Committee about her newly created position and some of the challenges she faces.

### **Approval of Meeting Minutes**

The Committee accepted the meeting minutes for January 22, 2005.

### **Commissioner's Comments**

Commissioner Melton's wife had been hurt in an auto accident and so he was unable to attend the meeting. Richard Rico summarized a few items from the previous day's Arizona Game and Fish Commission meeting that he thought might be of interest. First were the changes to the Fall 2005 big game hunt application process and bonus point system. To keep customers informed, a special "fall draw" page has been created for the Department web site; the page, [www.azgfd.gov/draw](http://www.azgfd.gov/draw), will explain the changes. Secondly, Mr. Rico informed the Committee about a public meeting regarding the Conservation Bonus Point, which will be held on May 14<sup>th</sup> at the State Fair Grounds Wildlife Building.

### **Updates/Current Issues**

Josh Avey updated the Committee on several items the Landowner Relations Program (LRP) has been involved with. He gave a brief update on the multi-agency effort to create uniform off-highway vehicle (OHV) laws. The revisions to Title 28 should be ready for the State Legislature in 2006. It includes a proposed \$20.00 tag for OHV's, which will provide funding for enforcement and the creation of OHV areas. Sanford Cohen, who is a member of the Arizona OHV Legislative Workgroup, gave some additional information on how the "copper sticker" program would be run and which vehicles would be required to have the stickers. Mr. Cohen suggested that Ed Jahrke be requested to attend the next meeting and give the Committee more information on the Title 28 rewriting.

Mr. Avey gave the Committee an update on projects in southeast Arizona. He told the Committee that the Region V Access Program Coordinator has been struggling with health problems for about two months. As a result, some of the projects in southeast Arizona have been delayed. The Department's first conservation easement, at the O Bar O Ranch, has been completed through the Landowner Incentive Program and will benefit the landowner, public, and at-risk species of wildlife. Work has continued on the Peck Canyon project, which involves the purchase of a 26-acre parcel in order to establish a permanent right-of-way, however, a problem has developed. The landowner has requested more money than the State can legally pay. The LRP is searching for groups who would be willing to partner up to get the additional \$50,000.00 needed to take advantage of this opportunity to create a permanent access to Peck Canyon. This access would be essential if the Tumacacori Highlands Wilderness Proposal were to be approved. A recent locking of the access to the east end of the Aravaipa Wilderness brought to light an even bigger potential problem: approximately 600 miles of roads maintained by Graham County do not have public easements. The LRP and Bureau of Land Management will be meeting with Graham County regarding methods to fix this problem.

Josh Avey informed the Committee that \$3.8 million is currently available through "Open Spaces", an Arizona Department of Agriculture grant. Darcy Ely and the LRP are both preparing some project proposals in the hopes of utilizing some of that funding. This grant will make available another \$2 million annually in state funds with no match required. Mr. Avey added that "Open Fields" has been reintroduced at the legislature, if this grant program goes through it will provide Federal funding for access projects.

Mr. Avey told the Committee that the road grader position continues to work on several ranches and has been well received. Two more years of funding from the Wildlife Conservation Fund have been approved. During an early April meeting regarding the Boquillas Ranch, the Navajo Nation was very interested in road maintenance. This program and others were discussed for possible use at the

Fletcher Ranch. The Unit 19A Wildlife Manager suggested not doing anything at this point, as it appears that Mr. Fletcher may be considering unlocking the gate, which is causing the problems.

### **Identification of Current Issues and Possible Solutions**

Joe Underwood updated the Committee on OHV issues at the Rail X Ranch. He said the Pima County Sheriff is patrolling the area, which is helping. Troy Christensen added that the Tucson Rough Riders Club would be holding a cleanup project there this fall. Mr. Underwood stated that off-highway recreation issues require full-time attention and added that the LRP cannot be expected to handle it along with all their other duties. Then he made a motion that the Committee recommend that the Department look into opportunities to fill the OHV Coordinator position.

Stephen Williams complimented the Department and specifically Wildlife Manager Gabriel Paz for the work with the Unit 36 Clean-up Projects, which have had a major impact on the area south of Three Points. Joe Underwood added that Gabriel Paz is also a great help with the Unit Watch projects that S.A.B.O.T. conducts in that same area. Josh Avey said that Lance Altherr, the originator of Arizona Hunters Who Care, should also be recognized for his efforts with organizing the clean ups; in March, 288 volunteers removed over 100,000 pounds of trash. Mr. Avey added that if Committee members wanted to see a list of their successes and the next clean-up date, they should check the group's newly created web site, [www.azhunterswhocare.org](http://www.azhunterswhocare.org).

John King asked for an update on the memorandum of understanding (MOU) with the U.S. Border Patrol, regarding the closure of wildcat roads created during pursuit of undocumented aliens. Josh Avey said the agencies continue to work to create a revised MOU. LRP hopes to create a broader agreement, which will include some of the suggestions brought up during a previous Committee meeting.

Richard Rico said that nominations are being requested for the Habitat Steward of the Year Award. One nomination has been received to date; it is for Jack Tellas of the Double U Ranch, near Tombstone. Josh Avey stated that Mr. Tellas is an excellent candidate for the award. If anyone knows of any other ranches deserving of the award, please contact Troy Christensen.

Richard Rico said that he had recently been in the Desert Wells Multi-Use Area; he added that it appeared that most people were using the area responsibly. David Hoyle gave some additional information about the situation there. Stephen Williams said that the LRP had contacted him regarding cattle guards proposed for the area through an Arizona State Parks OHV grant.

Sanford Cohen's informed the Committee about a multi-agency signing and enforcement effort going on to correct issues in and around Castle Hot Springs. He also spoke about a U.S. Forest Service effort to address wildcat dumping and shooting sites along Iron Springs Road, north of Prescott. Access will be restricted for vehicles over 48 inches wide, such as pick-ups and trailers that might haul junk to use for target shooting, while trail connectivity will be maintained for narrower vehicles. Target shooting will continue to be allowed, but hopefully the amount of trash will decrease.

### **Next Meeting**

The next LLSRC meeting will be scheduled in conjunction with the Arizona Cattle Growers Association Convention, which will be held in Sedona from July 17-20. Committee members will be informed of the date and time of that meeting once it has been determined.

**Action Items:**

1. Meeting minutes distributed. (LRP Staff)
2. Work with Arizona Cattle Growers Association to schedule the next LLSRC meeting at such a time as to avoid conflicts with ASLD, Federal Land, and Game meetings. Inform Committee. (LRP Staff)
3. Request that Ed Jahrke attend the next meeting and give the Committee more information on the Title 28 rewriting. (LRP Staff)
4. Look into opportunities for the Department to fill the OHV Coordinator position. (LRP Staff)

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